DA‘WAH

TO

CHRISTIANS

Da'wah to Christians

There are two main sects of Christians: Catholics and Protestants, and three main heretical sects: Jehovah's Witness, Seventh Day Adventists, and Mormons.

Catholics are the oldest – the earliest split was the Eastern Orthodox (Greek and Russian Orthodox churches have different organizational structure, but essential beliefs the same).

Protestants split over Catholic hierarchy: Pope, bishops, etc and saint worship. Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Calvin (1509-1564) lead a reform movement, which later became known as the Protestant movement. It rejected the accumulated rites, rituals and hierarchy of Roman Catholicism in an attempt to return to a purer form of Christianity. After a bitter struggle with church leaders leading to the excommunication of many reformers, a number of communities throughout Europe broke off and formed new churches in which Mary, the mother of Jesus, was no longer worshipped, and intercession through saints was no longer sought. Priests were allowed to marry, and the infallibility of the authority of the Pope was totally rejected. Rites like communion, in which little pieces of bread were served to the congregation in the belief that the pieces were somehow transformed into the body of Jesus Christ, were dropped along with the use of Latin in church rites.

Scriptural Difference
The Protestant Bible has seven less books than that of the Catholics.

Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

4.5 Million followers with 30,000 missionaries gathering 200,000 converts yearly (1980 figures)

Founder: Joseph Smith (1805-1844 killed)
1822 Angel Moroni came
Book of Mormon published 1830

Smith's closest disciple, Brigam Young (1801-1877), took followers to Utah, and took 25 wives and promoted unrestricted polygamy, until the USA government threatened to revoke statehood. Mr. Young received revelation that polygamy was abrogated.

Unusual Beliefs
Adam actually God incarnated who came to Eden (in Missouri) with one of his heavenly wives, Eve. Had sexual relations with Mary to produce Jesus.
God physically a huge man along with mother-wife begat all human spirits
Until 1978 blacks could not enter the priesthood (age 14 males enter Aaronic priesthood and at age 20 they enter the higher office of Melchezdec), thus all 17 temples of the sect were off-limits to blacks. Then First President, Spencer Kimball got revelation to include blacks.

Seventh Day Adventism

William Miller (1782-1849) calculated end of the world between 21March 1843 and 21 March 1844 (followers called Millerites)
Samuel Snow later recalculates the date as Oct. 22, 1844.
After the “Great Disappointment” remnants gather under Hiram Edson, Joseph Bates and Ellen White (1827-1950)

Unusual Beliefs

1844 Christ entered heavenly sanctuary to judge sins of living and dead
Ellen White a true prophet
Sabbath – Seventh day (Saturday)
No pork, alcohol or tobacco

Jehovah’s Witness

4.1 million followers, 200,000 converts yearly

Founder: Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) a former Millerite and Christadelphian
Rejected eternal punishment
Started *Watchtower* 1879 – informal following in the millions, but organized only a distributorship of tracts (100,000 books and 800,000 magazines printed daily)
Followers called: Bible Students
Joseph F. Rutherford (1869-1942) lawyer took over and officially named group “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in 1931

Unusual Beliefs

Jesus not God, but son of God and His first creation.
Souls not separate from body
No hell
Tithing
World’s end predicted in 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975
(6,000 year to the end of the world recalculated from Eve’s creation who’s date of creation unrevealed currently)

The term “Jehovah” is not found in the Hebrew Bible – only in the Jehovah’s Witness translation “The New World Bible”.
Jewish custom to avoid pronouncing the divine name led them to write *yhwh* (Yahweh) in texts and read *adonai* (the Lord). In ignorance, later the vowels of *adonai* combined with the tetragrammaton to get Jehovah.

Born Again Christians

Among Mainstream Christians the most active in missionary work are the Charismatic Groups Commonly know as “Born Again” Christians – emphasize the gifts of the Holy Spirit
Stress is laid on reading the Bible

They consider mainstream Christians as not true Christians because they are not “born” of the Holy Spirit
First appeared among Protestants in 1960 and among Roman Catholics in 1966
Origins in Pentecostalism (1901 John Wesley and John Fletcher) in which Baptism in the Holy Spirit was stressed, and Glossalia (speaking in tongues) was practiced.
Approved by Pope Paul VI in 1973.

Consequently, one should be familiar with whom one is inviting to Islaam.

The Unifying Belief: Trinity
The unifying belief of mainstream Christianity is the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost/Spirit, three Gods in One. It is officially called the Nicene Creed and was agreed upon in a meeting of bishops in Nicea which took place in 325 CE. Bishops, like Arius, and others who supported Unitarianism and opposed the Trinitarian concept and the divinity of Jesus, where subsequently declared heretics, their followers hunted down, tortured and burned at the stake, and their gospels burned.

The Bible
Most Christians have not read the Bible, many have read small parts, most have only heard sections or verses mentioned in Church sermons. Their belief in Christian theology is most often very weak. Often times they have their own interpretations, thus, it is best to find out the status of their beliefs prior to beginning discussion, if possible.

The basic concept of Christianity: **God bore a son who was Himself and He allowed Himself to be sacrificed to Himself to free humankind of their sins**.

A Simple Approach

Logic: A=B, B=C, therefore A=C
Ask the Christian: “Could you ever become God?”
He should reply: “No, because I am a human being.”
Ask the Christian: “Was Jesus a human being?”
He should reply: “Yes.”
Inform the Christian: “Therefore, he could never be God.”

The Baby God
Christian insists that Jesus was the son of God, but that he and God are one and the same.
Inform the Christian: “Cows have calves; little cows. Cats have kittens; little cats. Humans have children; little humans. When God has a son, what is he? A little God? If so, you have two Gods.”

For Catholics (Most Filipinos) who say: “Jesus was the son of God and not God.”
Ask the Catholic: “Don’t you say: Holy Mary Mother of God in your novena?”
He should reply: “Yes”
Ask the Catholic: “If Mary was the Mother of God, what was her son but a god?”
Ask the Catholic: “Where is Mary referred to as Mother of God in the New Testament?”

Ask the Catholic: “Can God have a mother?”

Distinguish between Jesus and God

Ask the Christian: “When Jesus prayed, to whom did he pray? Himself?”
Ask the Christian: “When Jesus was resurrected, according to your beliefs, where is he now? Sitting on the right hand of God? If so, how could he be God?”

If God is able to do anything, He could become a Man and have a Son
Logically speaking, the answer is no because the concept of God becoming man contradicts the basic meaning of the term “God.” People commonly say that God is able to do all things; whatever He wants to do, He can do. In the Bible of Christians it is said, “… through God all things are possible (Matthew, 19: 26; Mark 10: 27, 14: 36).” The Qur’aan of Muslims states, “Indeed, Allah (God) is able to do all things (Qur’aan, 2: 20),” and the Hindu scriptures carry texts of similar meanings.

All the major religious texts contain general expressions regarding the basic concept of God’s omnipotence. He is Greater than all things, and through Him all things are possible. If this general concept is to be translated into practical terms, one has to first identify and understand the basic attributes of God. Most societies perceive God as an eternal being without beginning or end. If, on the basis that God is able to do all things, and it were asked whether God could die, what would be the answer? Since dying is part of “all things,” can it be said, “If He wants to?” Of course this cannot be said. So, there is a problem here. God is defined as being ever-living, without end, and dying means “coming to an end.” Consequently, to ask if He can die is actually a nonsensical question. It is self-contradictory. Similarly, to ask whether God can be born, is also absurd because God has already been defined as eternal, having no beginning. Being born means having a beginning, coming into existence after not existing. In this same vein, atheist philosophers enjoy asking theists: “Can God create a stone too heavy for Him to lift?” If the theist says yes, it means that God can create something greater than Himself. And if he says no, it means that God is unable to do all things.

Therefore, the term “all things” in the phrase “God is able to do all things” excludes the absurdities. It cannot include things that contradict His divine attributes; things that would make Him less than God, like, forgetting, sleeping, repenting, growing, eating, etc. Instead, it includes only “all things” that are consistent with Him being God. This is what the statement “God is able to do all things” means. It cannot be understood in the absolute sense; it must be qualified.

The claim that God became man is also an absurdity. It is not befitting of God to take on human characteristics because it means that the Creator has become His creation. However, the creation is a product of the creative act of the Creator. If the Creator became His creation, it would mean that the Creator created Himself, which is an obvious absurdity. To be created, He would first have to not exist, and, if He did not exist, how could He then create? Furthermore, if He were created, it would mean that He had a beginning, which also contradicts His being eternal. By definition creation is in need of a creator. For created beings to exist they must have a creator to bring them into existence.

God cannot need a creator because God is the Creator. Thus, there is an obvious contradiction in terms. The claim that God became His creation implies that He would need a creator, which is a ludicrous concept. It contradicts the fundamental concept of God being uncreated, needing no creator and being the Creator.

Jesus' Miracles

Many Christians are under the impression that Jesus' miracles were unique to himself and thus constitute evidence for his divinity. However, the majority of Jesus' miracles are recorded in the Old Testaments as having been done by earlier Prophets.

Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fishes.	Elisha fed 100 people with twenty barley loaves and a few ears of corn (II Kings 4:44)
Jesus healed lepers.	Elisha cured Naaman the leper (II Kings 5:14).
Jesus caused the blind to see.	Elisha caused the blind to see (II Kings 6:17&20).
Jesus raised the dead.	Elijah did the same (I Kings 17:22). So did Elisha (II Kings 4:34). Even Elisha's bones could restore the dead (II Kings 13:21).
Jesus walked on water.	Moses and his people crossed the dead sea (Exodus 14:22).

Furthermore, there are also texts in the New Testament which confirm that Jesus did not act on his own. Jesus is quoted in John 5:30, as saying: "I can of mine own self do nothing..." and in Luke 11:20, as saying, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you." In Acts 2:22, Paul writes: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know..."

Jesus the "Son of God"

Another of the evidences used for Jesus' divinity is the application of the title "Son of God" to Jesus. It should first be noted that nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus actually call himself "Son of God".[1] Instead, he is recorded to have repeatedly called himself

[1] In the New Testament Book of Acts, there are several outlines of speeches of the early disciples of Jesus, speeches which date from the year 33 CE, almost forty years before the Four Gospels were written. In one of these discourses, Jesus is referred to specifically as *andra apo tou theou:* "a *man* from God." (Acts 2:22). Not once do these early confessions of faith use the expression *wios tou theou:* "Son of God", but they do speak several times of Jesus as God's servant and prophet (Acts 3:13, 22, 23, 26). The significance of these speeches is that they accurately reflect the original belief and terminology of the disciples, before the belief and terminology were evolved under the influence of Roman religion and Greek philosophy. They reflect a tradition which is older than that used by the Four Gospels, in which Jesus is not invested with godship or divine sonship. (*Bible Studies From a Muslim Perspective,* p. 12).

"Son of man" (e.g. Luke 9:22) innumerable times. And in Luke 4:41, he actually rejected being called "Son of God": "And demons also came out of many, crying, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ." However, there are numerous places in the Old Testament where this title has been given to others.

God called Israel (Prophet Jacob) His "son" when He instructed Prophet Moses to go to Pharaoh in Exodus 4:22-23, "22 And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, "Israel is my first-born son, 23and I say to you , 'Let my son go that he may serve me.' " ' "[2]

In 2nd Samuel 8:13-14, God calls Prophet Solomon His son, "13 He [Solomon] shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14I will be his father, and he shall be my son."

God promises to make Prophet David His son in Psalms 89:26-27, "26 He shall cry unto me, 'Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation,' 27Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth."[3]

Angels are referred to as "sons of God" in The Book of Job 1:6, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them."[4]

In the New Testament, there are many references to "sons of God" other than Jesus. For example, when the author of the Gospel according to Luke listed Jesus' ancestors back to Adam, he wrote: "The son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."[5]

Some claim that what is unique in the case of Jesus, is that he is the only begotten[6] Son of God, while the others are merely "sons of God". However, God is recorded as saying to Prophet David, in Psalms 2:7, "I will tell the decree of the Lord: He said to me, 'You are my son, today I have begotten you.' "

The Way of Jesus

An alternative approach is to question Christians about the degree to which they actually follow Jesus Christ. Prophets brought divine laws or confirmed those brought by previous prophets, and invited people to worship God by obeying the divinely revealed laws. They also practically demonstrated for their followers how one should live by the law. Consequently, they also invited those who believed in them to follow their way as the

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[2] See also, Hosea 1:10, of the *King James Version.*
[3] In the *Revised Standard Version,* it states: "*And I will make him **the** first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth.*" See also Jeremiah 31:9, "*...for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first-born.*"
[4] See also, Job 2:1 and 38:4-7. Other references to sons of God can also be found in Genesis 6:2, Deuteronomy 14:1 and Hosea 1:10.
[5] Luke 3:38.
[6] The term "begotten" in Old English meant 'to be fathered by' and it was used to distinguish between Jesus, who was supposed to be the literal son of God, from the figurative use of the term 'son' for God's "created sons".

correct way to come close to God. This principle is enshrined in the Gospel according to John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.” Although those who worship Jesus commonly quote this verse as part of the evidence for his divinity, Jesus did not invite people to worship himself instead of God, or as God. If these words were actually spoken by Jesus, what they mean is that one cannot worship God except in the way defined by the prophets of God. Jesus emphasized to his disciples that they could only worship God by the way which he had taught them. In the Qur’aan, Chapter Aal ‘Imraan, 3: 31, God instructs Prophet Muhammad ( ) to instruct mankind to follow him if they truly love God:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللهُ وَيَغْفِرْلَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

> “Tell [the people]: If you really love Allaah, then follow me and Allaah will love you and forgive your sins, for Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

The way of the prophets is the only way to God, because it was prescribed by God Himself and the purpose of the prophets was to convey Allaah’s instructions to mankind. Without prophets, people would not know how to worship Allaah. Consequently, all prophets informed their followers of how to worship God. Conversely, adding anything to the religion brought by the prophets is incorrect.

Any changes made to the religion after the time of the prophets represents deviation inspired by Satan. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad ( ) was reported to have said, “Whoever adds anything new to the religion of Islam, will have it rejected [by God].”7 Furthermore, anyone who worshipped Allaah contrary to Jesus’ instructions, would have worshipped in vain.

First and foremost, it must be realized that Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, was the last in the line of Jewish prophets. He lived according to the Torah, the law of Moses, and taught his followers to do likewise. In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus stated: “17 Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the [way of] the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18For, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” Unfortunately, about five years after the end of Jesus’ ministry, a young rabbi by the name of Saul of Tarsus, who claimed to have seen Jesus in a vision, began to change Jesus’ way. Paul (his Roman name) had considerable respect for Roman philosophy and he spoke proudly of his own Roman citizenship. His conviction was that non-Jews who became Christians should not be burdened with the Torah in any respect. The author of Acts 13:39 quotes Paul as saying, “And by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.” It was primarily through the efforts of Paul that

[7] *Sahih Al-Bukhari,* vol. 3, p. 535, no. 861, and *Sahih Muslim,* vol. 3, p. 931, no. 4266.

the Church began to take on its non-Jewish character. Paul[8] wrote most of the New Testament letters (epistles), which the Church accepts as the official doctrine and inspired Scripture. These letters do not preserve the Gospel of Jesus or even represent it;[9] instead, Paul transformed the teachings of Christ into a Hellenic (Greco-Roman) philosophy.

The following are some examples of teachings which Prophet Jesus followed and taught, but which were later abandoned by the Church. However, most of these teachings were revived in the final message of Islaam brought by Prophet Muhammad ( ) and remain a fundamental part of Muslim religious practices until today.

Circumcision

Jesus was circumcised. According to the Old Testament, this tradition began with Prophet Abraham, who was himself neither a Jew nor a Christian. In Genesis 17:10, it is written, "**9** And God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. **10**This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. **11**You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. **12**He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised; every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house, or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, **13**both he that is born in your house and he that is bought with your money, shall be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant."

In the Gospel according to Luke 2:21: "And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." Consequently, to be circumcised was a part of Jesus' way. However, today most Christians are not circumcised, because of a rationale introduced by Paul. He claimed that circumcision was the circumcision of the heart. In his letter to the Romans 2:29, he wrote: "He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal." In his letter to the Galatians 5:2, he wrote: "Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you."[10] This was Paul's false interpretation. On the other hand, Jesus was not circumcised by the heart nor did he say anything about circumcision of the heart; he kept the "everlasting covenant" and was circumcised in the flesh. Thus, an important part of following the way of Jesus is circumcision.

Pork

Jesus did not eat pork. He followed the laws of Moses and he did not eat pork. In Leviticus 11:7-8, "7 And the swine, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but

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[8] He was beheaded in Rome 34 years after the end of Jesus' ministry.

[9] *Biblical Studies From a Muslim Perspective*, p. 18.

[10] See also Galatians 6:15.

does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. 8Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean to you."11 Jesus' only dealing with pigs was his permission to the unclean spirits which were possessing a man to enter them. When they entered the herd of pigs, they ran into the water and drowned. However, most people who call themselves Christians today not only eat pork, they love it so much that they have made pigs the subject of nursery rhymes [e.g. This little piggy went to market ...] and children's stories [eg. The Three Little Pigs]. Porky Pig is a very popular cartoon character and recently a full-length feature movie was made about a pig called "Babe". Thus, it may be said that those who call themselves followers of Christ are not in fact following the way of Christ.

In Islamic law, the prohibition of pork and its products has been strictly maintained from the time of Prophet Muhammad ( ) until today. Jesus and his early followers observed the proper method of slaughter by mentioning God's name and cutting the jugular veins of the animals while they were living to allow the heart to pump out the blood. However, Christians today do not attach much importance to proper slaughter methods, as prescribed by God.

Alcohol

Jesus consecrated himself to God and therefore abstained from alcoholic drinks according to the instructions recorded in Numbers 6:1-4: "And the Lord said to Moses, 2'Say to the people of Israel, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of the Nazirite,12 to separate himself to the Lord, 3he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink, and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. 4All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins."

As to the 'miracle of turning water into wine',13 it is found only in the Gospel of John, which consistently contradicts the other three gospels. As mentioned earlier, the Gospel of John was opposed as heretical in the early Church,14 while the other three Gospels were referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because the texts contained a similar treatment of Jesus' life.15 Consequently, New Testament scholars have expressed doubt about the authenticity of this incident.

Ablution before Prayer

Prior to making formal prayer, Jesus used to wash his limbs according to the teachings of the Torah. Moses and Aaron are recorded as doing the same in Exodus 40:30-1, "**30** And

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[11] See also, Deuteronomy 14:8.

[12] That is *one separated* or *one consecrated.*

[13] John 2:1-11.

[14] *The Five Gospels,* p. 20.

[15] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 5, p. 379.

he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing, **31**with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet.... as the Lord commanded Moses."

Prostration in Prayer

Jesus is described in the Gospels as prostrating during prayer. In Matthew 26:39, the author describes an incident which took place when Jesus went with his disciples to Gethsemane: "And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Christians today kneel down, clasping their hands, in a posture which cannot be ascribed to Jesus. The method of prostration in prayer followed by Jesus was not of his own making. It was the mode of prayer of the prophets before him. In the Old Testament, Genesis 17:3, Prophet Abraham is recorded to have fallen on his face in prayer; in Numbers 16:22 & 20:6, both Moses and Aaron are recorded to have fallen on their faces in worship; in Joshua 5:14 & 7:6, Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped; in I Kings 18:42, Elijah bowed down on the ground and put his face between his knees. This was the way of the prophets through whom God chose to convey His word to the world; and it is only by this way that those who claim to follow Jesus will gain the salvation which he preached in his Gospel.

Veiling

The women around Jesus veiled themselves according to the practice of the women around the earlier prophets. Their garments were loose and covered their bodies completely, and they wore scarves which covered their hair. In Genesis 24:64-5 : "And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel, 65and said to the servant, 'Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us?' The servant said, 'It is my master.' So she took her veil and covered herself." Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, "5 But any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven. 6For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil." Some may argue that it was the general custom of those times to be completely veiled. However, that is not the case. In both Rome and Greece, whose cultures dominated the region, the popular dress was quite short and revealed the arms, legs and chest. Only religious women in Palestine, following Jewish tradition, covered themselves modestly.

According to Rabbi Dr. Menachem M. Brayer (Professor of Biblical Literature at Yeshiva University), it was customary that Jewish women went out in public with a head-covering which, sometimes, even covered the whole face, leaving only one eye free.16

[16] *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature,* p. 239.

He further stated that “during the Tannaitic period, the Jewish woman’s failure to cover her head was considered an affront to her modesty. When her head was uncovered she might be fined four hundred zuzim for this offence.”17

The famous early Christian theologian, St. Tertullian (d. 220 CE), in his famous treatise, ‘On The Veiling of Virgins’ wrote, “Young women, you wear your veils out on the streets, so you should wear them in the church; you wear them when you are among strangers, then wear them among your brothers...” Among the Canon laws of the Catholic church until today, there is a law that requires women to cover their heads in church.18 Christian denominations, such as the Amish and the Menonites for example, keep their women veiled to the present day.

In Chapter al-Ahzaab (33): 59, the reason for veiling is given. Allaah states that it makes the believing women known in the society and provides protection for them from possible social harm.

Greetings

Jesus greeted his followers by saying “Peace be upon you”. In chapter 20:19, the anonymous author of the Gospel according to John wrote the following about Jesus after his supposed crucifixion: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’ ” This greeting was according to that of the prophets, as mentioned in the books of the Old Testament. For example, in 1st Samuel 25:6, Prophet David instructed emissaries whom he sent to Nabal: “And thus you shall salute him: ‘Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.’ ” The Qur’aan instructs all who enter homes to give greetings of peace;19 and those entering paradise will be greeted similarly by the angels.20 Whenever Muslims meet each other, they use this greeting.

Fasting

According to the Gospels, Jesus fasted for forty days. Matthew 4:2: “And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.”21 This was in accordance with the practice of the earlier prophets. Moses is also recorded in Exodus 34:28, to have fasted: “And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.”

The purpose of fasting is clearly defined in Qur’aan (2: 183) as being for the development of God-consciousness. Only God knows who is actually fasting and who is

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[17] Ibid., p. 139.

[18] Clara M. Henning, “Canon Law and the Battle of the Sexes,” in *Religion and Sexism,* p. 272.

[19] Chapter an-Noor, (24):27.

[20] Chapter al-A‘raaf, (7):46.

[21] See also Matthew 6:16 and 17:21.

not. Consequently, one who is fasting refrains from eating and drinking based on an awareness of God. Regular fasting heightens that awareness, which subsequently leads to a greater inclination towards righteousness.

The believers are required to fast from dawn until dusk for the whole month of Ramadaan (the ninth month of the lunar calendar). Prophet Muhammad ( ) also said, "The best fast [outside of Ramadaan] is that of my brother [Prophet] David who used to fast every other day."22

Interest

By upholding the Law, Prophet Jesus also opposed the giving or taking of interest because the texts of the Torah expressly forbade interest. It is recorded in Deuteronomy 23:19 that, "You shall not lend upon interest to your brother, interest on money, interest upon victuals,23 interest on anything that is lent for interest."24 Interest is also strictly forbidden in Chapter al-Baqarah (2):278 of the Qur'aan:

> "O you who believe, fear Allaah and give up what interest remains due to you, if you really are believers."

In order to fulfill this divine requirement, Muslims developed an alternative system of banking, commonly known as 'Islamic Banking', which is interest-free.

Polygamy

There is no record of Prophet Jesus opposing polygamy. If he did so, it would have meant that the condemned the practice of the prophets before him. There are a number of examples of polygamous marriages among the prophets recorded in the Torah. Prophet Abraham had two wives, according to Genesis 16:13: "So after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to Abram her husband <u>as a wife</u>." So did Prophet David, according to the first book of Samuel 27:3, "And David dwelt with Achish at Gat, he and his men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahin'oam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow." In 1st Kings 11:3, Solomon is said to have "...had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines." Solomon's son, Rehobo'am, also had a number of wives, according to 2nd Chronicles 11:21, "Rehobo'am loved Ma'acah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and concubines (he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and had twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters)." In fact, the Torah even specified laws regarding the division of inheritance in polygamous circumstances. In Deuteronomy 21:15-16, the law states: "15 If a man has two wives, the

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[22] *Sahih Al-Bukhari,* vol.3, pp.113-4, no.200 and *Sahih Muslim,* vol.2, p.565, no.2595.

[23] Food or provisions.

[24] However, in the verse following this one, the Jews made lending on interest to non-Jews permissible: "*To a foreigner you may lend upon interest, but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest.*" (Deuteronomy 23:20)

one loved and the other disliked, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the disliked, and if the first-born son is hers that is disliked, 16then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the first-born in preference to the son of the disliked, who is the first-born." The only restriction on polygamy was the ban on taking a wife's sister as a rival wife in Leviticus 18:18, "And you shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is yet alive." The Talmud advises a maximum of four wives as was the practice of Prophet Jacob.25

According to Father Eugene Hillman, "Nowhere in the New Testament is there any explicit commandment that marriage should be monogamous or any explicit commandment forbidding polygamy."26 He further stressed the fact that the Church in Rome banned polygamy in order to conform to Greco-Roman culture which prescribed only one legal wife while tolerating concubinage and prostitution.27

Islaam limited polygamy to a maximum of four wives at one time and stipulated the maintenance of justice as a basic condition for polygamy Qur'aan (4:3), God states:

> "Marry of the women that please you two, three or four. But if you fear that you will not be able to deal justly, then [marry only] one ..."

Christian Scriptures

Authorship

According to Biblical scholars, even the authorship of the Old Testament books and the Gospels themselves is in doubt.

Torah

The first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch)28 are traditionally attributed to Prophet Moses,29 however, there are many verses within these books which indicate that Prophet Moses could not possibly have written everything in them. For example, Deuteronomy 34.5-8 states: "5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, 6 and he buried him in the valley of the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows the place of his burial to this day. 7 Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. 8 And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty

[25] *Women in Judaism,* p. 148.
[26] *Polygamy Reconsidered,* p. 140.
[27] Ibid., p. 17.
[28] Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
[29] Orthodox Jews claim that the Torah, the Jewish name for the first five books, was created 974 generations before the creation of the world. According to them, God dictated the Torah during the 40 days Moses was on Mount Sinai, in such a final and irrevocable form that it is sinful to claim that Moses wrote even one letter of it by himself.

days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended." It is quite obvious that someone else wrote these verses about Prophet Moses' death.

In the appendix of the Revised Standard Version entitled "Books of the Bible," the following is written concerning the authorship of over one third of the remaining books of the Old Testament:

Books	Authors
Judges	Possibly Samuel
Ruth	Perhaps Samuel
First Samuel	Unknown
Second Samuel	Unknown
First Kings	Unknown
Second Kings	Unknown
First Chronicles	Unknown
Esther	Unknown
Job	Unknown
Ecclesiastes	Doubtful
Jonah	Unknown
Malachi	Nothing known

Apocrypha

More than half of the world's Christians are Roman Catholics. Their version of the Bible was published in 1582 from Jerome's Latin Vulgate, and reproduced at Douay in 1609. The Old Testament of the RCV (Roman Catholic Version) contains seven more books than the King James Version recognized by the Protestant world. The extra books are referred to as the apocrypha (i.e., of doubtful authority) and were removed from the Bible in 1611 by Protestant Bible scholars.

The Gospels

Aramaic was the spoken language of the Jews of Palestine. Consequently, it is believed that Jesus and his disciples spoke and taught in Aramaic.30 "The earliest oral tradition of Jesus' deeds and sayings undoubtedly circulated in Aramaic. However, the four Gospels were written in an entirely different speech, common Greek, the spoken

[30] Aramaic is a Semitic language which gradually supplanted Akkadian as the common tongue of the Near East in the 7th and 6th centuries BC. It later became the official language of the Persian Empire. Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the language of the Jews; portions of the Old Testament books of Daniel and Ezra are written in Aramaic, as are the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Its period of greatest influence extended from 300 BC until 650 CE, after which it was gradually supplanted by Arabic. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 1, p. 516)

language of the civilized Mediterranean world, to serve the majority of the Church, which was becoming Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) instead of Palestinian. Traces of Aramaic survive in the Greek Gospels. For example, in Mark 5:41, "Taking her by the hand he said to her, 'Tal'itha cu'mi'; which means 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' " and Mark 15:34, "And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'E'lo-i, E'lo-i, la'ma sabachtha'ni?' which means, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' "31

The New Testament Gospel of Mark, though considered by Church scholars to be the oldest of the Gospels, was not written by a disciple of Jesus. Biblical scholars concluded, based on the evidence contained in the Gospel, that Mark himself was not a disciple of Jesus. Furthermore, according to them, it is not even certain who Mark really was. The ancient Christian author, Eusebius (325 C.E.), reported that another ancient author, Papias (130 C.E.), was the first to attribute the Gospel to John Mark, a companion of Paul.32 Others suggested that he may have been the scribe of Peter and yet others hold that he was probably someone else.

The same is the case with the other Gospels. Although Matthew, Luke and John are the names of disciples of Jesus, the authors of the Gospels bearing their names were not those famous disciples, but other individuals who used the disciples' names to give their accounts credibility. In fact, all the Gospels originally circulated anonymously. Authoritative names were later assigned to them by unknown figures in the early church.33

Books	Authors
Gospel of Matthew	Unknown34
Gospel of Mark	Unknown35
Gospel of Luke	Unknown36
Gospel of John	Unknown37
Acts	The author of Luke38

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[31] *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 3, p. 654.

[32] *The Five Gospels,* p. 20, and *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 14, p. 824. For references to various Marks in the New Testament, see the following: Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5; 15:36-41; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; and I Peter 5:13.

[33] *The Five Gospels,* p. 20.

[34] "Although there is a Matthew named among the various lists of Jesus' disciples...the writer of Matthew is probably anonymous."*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 14, p. 826.

[35] "Though the author of Mark is probably unknown..."*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 14, p. 824.

[36] "The Muratorian Canon refers to Luke, the physician, Paul's companion; Irenaeus depicts Luke as a follower of Paul's gospel. Eusebius has Luke as an Antiochene physician who was with Paul in order to give the Gospel apostolic authority." *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 14, p. 827.

[37] "From internal evidence the Gospel was written by a beloved disciple whose name is unknown." *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 14, p. 828.

[38] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 14, p. 830.

I, II, III John	The author of John39

J.B. Phillips, a prebendary40 of the Chichester Cathedral, the Anglican Church of England, wrote the following preface for his translation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "Early tradition ascribed this Gospel to the apostle Matthew, but scholars nowadays almost all reject this view. The author, whom we can conveniently call Matthew, has plainly drawn on the mysterious "Q",41 which may have been a collection of oral traditions. He has used Mark's Gospel freely, though he has rearranged the order of events and has in several instances used different words for what is plainly the same story."42 The Fourth Gospel (John) was opposed as heretical in the early church, and it knows none of the stories associated with John, son of Zebedee.43 In the judgement of many scholars, it was produced by a "school" of disciples, probably in Syria in the last decade of the first century.44

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[39] Ibid., vol. 14, p. 844.

[40] A priest who receives income from the revenue of a church, especially a cathedral. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, p. 973.)

[41] There are about two hundred identical verses found in both Matthew and Luke (e.g. Matt 3:7-10 & Luke 3:7-9; Matt. 18:10-14 & Luke 15:3-7), with no equivalent in either Mark or John. As a way of explaining this striking agreement, a German scholar hypothesized that there once existed a source document, which he referred to as a *Quelle* (German for "source"). The abbreviation "Q" was later adopted as its name.

The existence of *Q* was once challenged by some scholars on the grounds that a sayings gospel was not really a gospel. The challengers argued that there were no ancient parallels to a gospel containing only sayings and parables and lacking stories about Jesus, especially the story about his trial and death. The discovery of the Gospel of Thomas changed all that. (*The Five Gospels*, p. 12.) Thomas contains one hundred and fourteen sayings and parables ascribed to Jesus; it has no narrative framework: no account of Jesus' exorcisms, healings, trial, death, and resurrection; no birth or childhood stories; and no narrated account of his public ministry in Galilee and Judea. The Coptic translation of this document (written about 350 C.E.), found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, has enabled scholars to identify three Greek fragments (dated around 200 C.E.), discovered earlier, as pieces of three different copies of the same gospel. Thomas has forty-seven parallels to Mark, forty parallels to *Q*, seventeen to Matthew, four to Luke, and five to John. About sixty-five sayings or parts of sayings are unique to Thomas. (*The Five Gospels*, p.15).

[42] *The Gospels in Modern English.*

[43] Since the late 18th century, the first three Gospels have been called the Synoptic Gospels, because the texts, set side by side, show a similar treatment of the life and death of Jesus Christ. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 5, p. 379).

[44] *The Five Gospels*, p. 20.